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**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

Montana Fish & Wildlife Commission

MINUTES - *Amended*

Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting

Montana WILD
2668 Broadwater, Helena

February 11, 2016

Commission Members Present: Dan Vermillion, Chairman, Richard Stuker Vice-Chairman, Matt Tourtlotte and Gary Wolfe; Richard Kerstein via video

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Staff Present: Jeff Hagener, Director and FWP Staff.

Guests: February 11, 2016 - See Commission file folder for sign-in sheet.

Topics of Discussion:

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Minutes of the January 14, 2016 Commission Meeting
3. Approval of the January 2016 Commission Expenses
4. Commission Reports
5. Director's Report
6. Budget Update and Priorities – Endorsement
7. Classification of Exotic Wildlife ARM/Controlled Species- Kinkajou/Honey Bear - Proposed
8. Deep Creek Instream Flow Water Right Leases – Endorsement
9. Lake Helena and Canyon Ferry Reservoir Five-Year Commercial Carp Fishing Permit-Final
10. Navratil Property Channel Migration Easement - Final
11. 2016-2017 Elk Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries - Final
12. 2016-2017 Elk Districts with Expanded Permission To Hunt From a Vehicle – Final
13. 2016-2017 Antelope Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries - Final
14. 2016-2017 Deer Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries - Final
15. 2016-2017 Moose Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries - Final
16. 2016-2017 Bighorn Sheep Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries - Final
17. 2016-2017 Mountain Goat Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries - Final
18. 2016-2017 Black Bear Hunting Seasons, Quota Ranges HD Boundaries and Quotas - Final
19. 2016-2017 Bison Hunting Seasons and HD Boundaries - Final
20. 2016-2017 Mountain Lion Hunting Seasons and HD Boundaries - Final
21. 2016-2017 Upland Game Bird Hunting Seasons, Quotas and HD Boundaries - Final
22. 2016-2017 Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons (contingent upon Federal frameworks)-Final
23. 2016 Early Season Migratory Bird Regulations – Proposed
24. 2016 Late Season Waterfowl Seasons/Closures – Proposed
25. 2016-2017 Hunting Season Dates - Final
26. 2016-2017 Helena Urban Deer Plan Quota Ranges and Quota - Final
27. 2016-2017 Game Damage/Management Season/Wildlife Health Authorizations Quotas - Final
28. Public Comment – For Issues Not On This Agenda

1. Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Vermillion called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Minutes of the January 14, 2016 Commission Meeting

Action: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Chairman Vermillion seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2016 Commission Meeting. Motion passed.

3. Approval of the January 2016 Commission Expenses

Action: Commissioner Tourtlotte moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion to approve the January 14, 2016 Commission expenses. Motion passed.

4. Commission Reports

Commissioner Kerstein reported he attended Regional Citizen Advisory Council (CAC) meetings. Most controversial issues have been accepted by the local people, especially the elk shoulder season.

Commissioner Wolfe reported he attended several big game public meetings in Region 1 and 2; well attended and lots of comments. Attended the annual Montana Outfitter and Guides Associations (MOGA) convention; very interesting and informative. Received several emails, letters and phone calls regarding items on the agenda. Approved several antlerless elk game damage hunts for Region 2; almost all hunts overlap with the shoulder seasons that are being proposed.

Commissioner Tourtlotte reported he received numerous communications on Hunting District (HD) 313 and shoulder seasons; good discussions with landowners, sportsmen and sportsmen groups. Approved an elk and turkey damage hunt.

Vice-Chairman Stuker reported he also received several communications on HD 313 and the proposed shoulder season. Approved damage hunts in Region 4 and 6. Questions asking if the Commission will have a say on the proposed bison transfer from Yellowstone National Park (YNP) to the Fort Peck quarantined area. Discussion at the CAC meeting and received several conversations regarding lands purchases; conversations the Department does not listen to the public, i.e.: Milk River Ranch; would rather talk to their legislator than the Department; possibly the legislators are listening to the individuals the Department is not listening to; for future meetings, the public would prefer local enforcement officials present instead of game wardens. Attended meeting in HD 401; hunter numbers have increased by 40 percent; harvest has doubled; elk have been controlled; good meeting; Department is working well with landowners within the Region; moving in the right direction. Conversation with a landowner requesting more weed control.

Chairman Vermillion stated he has received a lot of correspondence and had conversations on season setting, shoulder seasons and HD 313. Response and feedback he has been receiving on land purchases has been good; Congressional members strongly support the Land and Conservation Fund. The Milk River was a good purchase; investment for the future for recreational opportunities.

5. Director's Report

Director Hagener reported the snow pack level has dropped below average; concerns what that means for fisheries. Controversy over the Tribal Yellowstone Bison hunt and how many bison are being harvested; annual meeting with the Tribes will be this spring; will be a important meeting to discuss these issues. Governor has appointed the Private Land Public Wildlife Council (PL/PW); first meeting is scheduled the first week of March; several specific items need to be discussed. Keeping an eye on and being cautious after the Oregon issues. Final Finding Common Ground meeting is scheduled for February 25. Attended and participated on a panel at the Safari Club International convention in Las Vegas; Montana has the best opportunity for hunting. Debate is starting on the use of the latest technological equipment and is it fair chase.

Chairman Vermillion stated the letter to the Congressional leaders regarding the Idaho sheep station is ready to sign.

Chairman Vermillion read a Commission resolution for Alex Dickman, who lost his life after a courageous battle with cancer. Dickman worked for the Trust for Public Lands and was a long-standing member of the conservation community. (See a copy of the resolution in the February 11, 2016 Commission file).

Director Hagener concurred with the resolution; Dickman was a critical component and a true asset to the conservation community.

6. Budget Update and Priorities – Endorsement

Sue Daly, Chief of Administration, explained the Executive Planning Process (EPP), coordinated through the Governor's Office, is ready to begin for the 2017 Legislative Session. FWP's internal process involves establishing priorities that will drive preparation of proposed budgets; between February and June the Department will develop budgets based on the approved priorities, and submit them to the Governor. The Commission's role is to review and approve the agency's priorities. The Department will return in June for Commission review of the Executive budget proposal. No formal public process is undertaken; there is opportunity to comment at the February Commission meeting. The priorities are based on FWP's ongoing dialogue with constituents and Regional CACs. The Commission can approve or suggest modifications to the agency's proposed priorities. The Department will make every effort to implement these priorities based on Commission approval, executive direction, and the long-term benefits to the agency. Gave a brief update on the Fish and Wildlife funding status.

Chairman Vermillion and Daly discussed Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) funding and having the Department of Agriculture help with AIS funding.

Chairman Vermillion, Commissioner Wolfe and Daly discussed Pittman-Robertson funding.

Paul Sihler, Chief of Staff, explained the Department's 2017 priorities.

Chairman Vermillion, Vice-Chairman Stuker and Sihler discussed numerous priorities in detail; John Vore, Game Damage Bureau Chief, discussed the status of the elk management plan.

Action: *Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the motion that the Commission approve the Fish and Wildlife priorities for the 2017 Legislative Session as presented.*

Action on Motion: *Motion Passed.*

7. Classification of Exotic Wildlife ARM/Controlled Species- Kinkajou/Honey Bear – Proposed

Mike Lee, Wildlife Permit Manager/Classification Review Committee Chairman explained to be legally imported into Montana, exotic wildlife must be classified; a review committee evaluates petitions for such classifications. The committee makes recommendations to the Commission to classify exotic wildlife either as non-controlled, controlled, or prohibited. Recommendations are based on: The environmental impacts caused by the animal if it is released or escapes from captivity, including ecological and economic impacts; the risk the animal would pose to health or safety of the public, wildlife or agriculture; and the ability to readily control and contain the animal in captivity. The committee recommends the Commission propose an amendment to the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) to allow the Kinkajou (Honey Bear) as a controlled species, and may be possessed in Montana, only a Controlled Species permit from FWP.

Action: Chairman Vermillion moved and Commissioner Tourtlotte seconded the motion that the Commission propose the amendment to the classification of exotic species ARM 12.6.2208 as recommended by the classification review committee.

Chairman Vermillion, Commissioner Wolfe and Lee discussed the ARM proposal.

Vice-Chairman Stuker, Commissioner Wolfe and Commissioner Kerstein stated they don't believe another exotic species needs to be introduced into Montana.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Action on Motion: Motion Failed. 2-3.

Chairman Vermillion, Commissioner Tourtlotte - aye

Vice-Chairman Stuker, Commissioner Kerstein and Commissioner Wolfe - nay

8. Deep Creek Instream Flow Water Right Leases – Endorsement

Bruce Rich, Fisheries Administrator, explained Deep Creek is an important spawning tributary for the Missouri River in addition to providing a quality resident fishery. During the summer and into the early fall dewatering due to irrigation withdrawals reduces stream flow in Deep Creek, which in turn negatively affects the fishery. In 2013, flow in Deep Creek substantially improved due to a change in source of supply from Deep Creek to the Broadwater-Missouri Canal of a major irrigation project; in 2015, an additional project was completed to change the supply from Deep Creek to the Broadwater-Missouri Canal. It may not be possible to sustain the flow improvements without legally changing existing irrigation rights to instream flow. FWP has entered into a water right lease agreement with the City of Townsend, but the lease alone, which is expected to provide about ½ cubic feet per second (cfs), will not be sufficient to meet the 3-5 cfs objective for Deep Creek. Several water users have expressed interest in leasing their water to FWP; FWP has statutory authority to temporarily change leased water rights to instream flow. Staff met with the Broadwater-Missouri Water Users' Association Board and discussed the potential for FWP to lease additional water rights and replace the water leased with water from their canal. The Broadwater Conservation District has been informed of the potential for additional water right leases. In order to change a portion of the water right to instream flow, FWP must make application to the Department of Natural Resource and Conservation (DNRC). DNRC would conduct an environmental review and public comment would be sought. The water right lease agreements would be subject to final Commission approval at which time the public would have an opportunity to comment. Alternatives include FWP not to lease additional water rights and change them to instream flows, or for water users to temporarily change their water right to instream flow without the involvement of FWP; this alternative would require the water users to incur the legal and technical cost of pursuing the change to instream flow, for which they have no financial incentive.

Action: Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that FWP staff negotiate additional water-right lease agreements for irrigation water rights from Deep Creek sufficient to protect desired instream flow levels, subject to final approval by the Commission.

Chairman Vermillion stated the lease agreements in the Yellowstone Basin have been beneficial and the impact has been significant; hopefully the Deep Creek Leases will be negotiated.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Action on Motion: Motion Passed.

9. Lake Helena and Canyon Ferry Reservoir Five-Year Commercial Carp Fishing Permit – Final

Bruce Rich, Fisheries Administrator, stated the final proposal is unchanged from the tentative proposal (see minutes from the December 10, 2015 Commission meeting). Two comments were received; one in support and expressed the belief that carp are predators on perch eggs and by suppressing their numbers through commercial harvest the perch population can be protected; the comment against noted fly fishing for carp has become popular on these waters and should be a higher management priority than a commercial use.

Action: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the motion that the Commission approve the proposed regulations for a commercial fishing operation on Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena for 2016-2020.

Action on Motion: Motion Passed.

10. Navratil Property Channel Migration Easement – Final

Chairman Vermillion stated he is a member of the Montana Land Reliance (MLR) and recused himself from this decision; asked Vice-Chairman Stuker to oversee the meeting for this agenda item.

Brad Schmitz, Region 7 Supervisor, explained collaboration with the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) and the Upper Basin Pallid Sturgeon Governing Board and Work Group. FWP developed a pilot Channel Migration Easement Program (CME) to protect naturally functioning floodplains along the Yellowstone River, which sustain Pallid Sturgeon and other aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. In 2009 and 2010, WAPA provided FWP funds to develop and implement the program for the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers, and was unable to locate a willing seller for an acceptable price; in 2013, Montana Aquatic Resource Services (MARS), located a willing seller. Gerald and Maryellen Navratil own approximately 230 acres on the Lower Yellowstone River, 89.5 acres of which are in the channel migration zone and adjacent erosion hazard area. On October 16, 2014, the Commission endorsed FWP to negotiate the terms of a conservation easement (CE) on the property. This easement would be held by the MLR, with FWP retaining a third-party right of enforcement; terms are agreed to and the Buy Sell Agreement has been signed by all parties. An Environmental Assessment (EA) was released and public comment was solicited; a public hearing specific to the EA was held in Sidney, where additional public comments were obtained; the EA was mailed to 18 groups and individuals, advertised in local papers and posted on the FWP website; 3 comments were received via email; 1 comment received was from a landowner downstream, who stated he would not have the opportunity to secure his water structure in the future. The proposed CME is not without controversy and concern.

Vice-Chairman Stuker, Commissioner Tourtlotte and Schmitz discussed how the easement would/would not affect the downstream landowner.

Commissioner Tourtlotte stated he would like to hear public comment prior to a motion being made.

Vice-Chairman Stuker asked for public comment.

Tom Hinz, MARS, project has been 10 years in the making (explained background of property); oldest family in the valley.

Kendall Van Dyke, MLR, thanked FWP staff for their involvement; presented and discussed exhibits of the property and surrounding areas, and the Record of Decision (ROD); need to send a message of whether to move-on with or without FWP.

Jay Bodner, Montana Stockgrowers Association (MSGA), had discussions with the lessee who uses the lateral ditch to irrigate; there are some provisions to protect the lateral ditch, important for irrigation.

Vice-Chairman Stuker and Director Hagener discussed if an Environment Impact Statement (EIS) needs to be completed.

Commissioner Wolfe, Schmitz and Hinz, discussed the conservation benefit of the easement.

Vice-Chairman Stuker asked if the Department still has concerns with the easement.

Schmitz stated he has an obligation to take into consideration all concerns; comfortable with moving forward.

Bill Schenk, FWP Attorney, explained his reasoning for the alternative motion, denying the release of WAPA funds at this time.

Vice-Chairman Stuker stated this easement is the first of this type along the river; need to proceed with caution; has concerns with the proposal.

Commissioner Tourtlotte stated this project has significant environmental, ecological and conservation benefits; the Department is a small partner; this is a valid and good proposal; the impact is remote; passing the easement is a good thing to do today.

Action: Commissioner Tourtlotte moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the motion that the Commission approve the release of the WAPA funds to purchase a channel migration easement on 89.5 acres of property belonging to Gerald and Maryellen Navratil, which is to be held by the Montana Land Reliance and be enforceable by FWP.

Commissioner Wolfe explained on almost any CE, there could be an adjacent landowner who objects; supports motion; believes placing a voluntary CE on one's property is the private property landowners right.

Vice-Chairman Stuker stated this is a private property issue; supports motion.

Vice-Chairman Stuker asked for public comment on the motion.

Action on Motion: Motion Passed.

11. 2016-2017 Elk Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries – Final

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief explained FWP proposes adopting the existing 2015 structure except for specific changes identified; proposals are based on population status and/or other circumstances. For the 2016 and 2017 elk-season structure, some of the more significant proposed changes include the establishment of early and/or late shoulder seasons in 43 HDs; establishing more liberal general season opportunities in many HDs; establishing HDs 217 and 451; eliminating the 900-00 bundled B licenses valid in Regions 4, 5, and 7 HDs; and a proposal in HD 313 to limit brow-tined bull harvest. The final FWP proposals for shoulder seasons and HD 313 have been modified in response to public comment. No changes are proposed for the elk archery permit structure. Comments received during scoping included interest in antlerless opportunities, archery permits, and public/private land management. Public comment ran from December 10 to January 22; 700 comments were received: 551 via survey monkey and 137 by mail or email; 550 people attended public meetings and many provided comment; most comments referred to shoulder seasons and HD 313, with the majority of the comments opposed.

HD 313

John Vore stated the objective of FWP's proposal is to increase the brow-tined bull:cow ratios to within 20% of the long-term average (LTA); 10 brow-tined bulls:100 cows in the Montana wintering population. If the Department observes 10 or more brow-tined bulls per 100 cows for two consecutive years within HD313, the Department will consider this change has been successful. FWP remains committed to this objective and measures of success. If significant progress toward the objective is not observed following the 2016 and 2017 seasons, FWP may revisit the season structure to address the issue. This could include, but is not limited to, a shorter general season and/or a longer portion of the season to be limited brow-tined bull permits, or other options. The following changes from the tentative proposal for HD 313 are (yellow highlights are changes that resulted from public comment and/or further consideration by staff):

~~Establish limited brow-tined bull permit 313-45 (quota 75, range 50-150) 1st choice only.~~

~~Unlimited brow-tined bull permits by drawing 1st choice only with no sales after March 15th – Hunters may not hunt antlered elk in any other hunting district.~~

~~Unlimited brow-tined bull permits as described above with a 6-point bull regulation.~~

~~Unlimited brow-tined bull permits as described above with a shorter season.~~

~~Unlimited brow-tined bull permits as described above with a harvest quota monitored at the Slip & Slide Check Station.~~

~~Unlimited brow-tined bull permits as described above and close Deckard Flats/Eagle Basin.~~

~~Readjust the HD 313/314 boundary.~~

Archery and first 3 weeks of general rifle season opportunity brow-tined Bull only with General License followed by the last 2 weeks of general rifle season with 50 limited brow-tined bull draw permits (quota range 1-100), 1st Choice-only.

Redefine emergency closure area to include area east of Deckard Flats to Trail Creek.

Establish 313-00 youth-only B License (quota 30, range 15 – 50).

Establish 313-01 B License (quota 30, range 15-50).

Eliminate 313-10 youth-only brow-tined bull or antlerless permit.

Action: *Chairman Vermillion moved and Commissioner Tourlotte seconded the motion that the Commission adopt hunting district 313's 2016-17 proposal as presented by FWP.*

Commissioner Wolfe asked what the actual goal is.

Vore stated the goal has always been to restore brow-tined bulls:100 cows ratios.

Vice-Chairman Stuker stated he has concerns with the proposal, especially the 30 youth-only B licenses.

Vore explained the Department is also concerned with the antlerless licenses, but wants to offer the opportunity; take is usually around 50%, the loss of 15 cows would not have a measurable demographic effect.

Vice-Chairman Stuker and Vore discussed "width and point" bull regulations and mortality.

Commissioner Tourlotte and Vore discussed what factors make the six-point regulation superior in the Departments mind.

Chairman Vermillion explained the importance of the emergency closure as a backstop.

Chairman Vermillion and Vore discussed the six-point restriction.

Commissioner Wolfe explained his concerns with the point restrictions; asked if the four-inch limitation was statutory or Commission regulation.

Vore stated the four-inch limitation is Commission regulation.

Commissioner Wolfe stated a six-point restriction would protect the majority of the 2 ½ year olds, and approximately half of the 3 ½ year olds, a good component would be established for the following breeding and hunting season.

Commissioners and Vore had a lengthy discussion on point restrictions.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Nick Gevok, Montana Wildlife Federation (MWF), reasonable proposal; balances the need to reduce the harvest of mature bulls with desire to maintain hunting opportunity; give it a chance to work; supports proposal.

Mack Minard, MOGA, a lot of frustration; changing dynamic; recommends unlimited permit first and only choice; six-point restriction has a lot of merit.

Edwin Johnson, Royal Teton Ranch, worried about the health of the herd; Gardiner residents will not be able to hunt with families; proposal will not limit the harvest of brow-tined bulls; enforcement issues.

Edward Johnson, Gardiner, residents have dealt with wildlife and management issues for a long time; limiting permits will harm local hunters and effect businesses; hunting is a tradition; will affect people on all sides; consider social consequences.

Scott Sallee, Emigrant, problem with restricting and losing public access; problem has become an outfitter issue; the 313 has always been a elk migrating area; first choice is the most suitable choice; point restriction will not work; needs to be managed different than other areas in Montana.

Sandy Sallee, Emigrant, supports first choice, only choice; not a trophy hunt for residents, it is a meat hunt; need a check station.

Matt Cunningham, Gardiner, putting undue pressure on the local non-migratory elk; stay with six-point regulation.

Joe Perry, Montana Sportsmen Alliance (MSA), affects all residents of Montana; preferred original proposal; will support the Departments comprise; it is up to everyone to help correct the problem.

Jack Davis, Livingston, opposes proposal; elk are on the increase; leave season alone.

Mike Spoturno, Helena, supports original proposal; over kill of brow-tined bulls in HD 313.

Ron Moody, Lewistown, urges to stop and think if the proposal meets the original objective of maintaining a healthy sustainable population; leaving no margin for error.

Gary Duffy (via Rep. Redfield), Pray, against proposal; does away with the Coming Home to Hunt Program.

Representative Alan Redfield, HD 59, concerned about eliminating local family hunts; limit closure and designate HDs.

Kathryn QannaYahu, Enhancing Montana's Wildlife and Habitat (EMWH), comprises are not going far or fast enough to correct problem; increase pressure during archery season; concerned with the antlerless B license; proposal is not enough.

Neil Jacobson, Lakeside, six-point bull could have a one inch tine on top; penalizing Montana sportsmen in favor of outfitting clients.

J.W. Westman, Laurel Road and Gun Club (LRGC), prefers original proposal; do not include a six-point option; Department should always revisit the season structures to address these type of issues.

Tim Aldrich, Missoula, need to sustain viable population; not the only place in Montana people can pursue elk; preferred original proposal but will support.

Vice-Chairman Stuker stated the original proposal would have accomplished the goal; current proposal may or may not; six-point possibly will help; herd is slowly increasing in size.

Amended Motion: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved to amend the motion to unlimited permits with no more issued beyond the March 15 deadline, hunting district 313 permit holders may not hunt antlerless elk in any other district, harvest of elk in HD 313 be limited to at least six-points on one side, and close Deckard Flats to the Jardine road.

Commissioner Wolfe asked what the legal definition of an antler point is.

Vore stated a point is defined as at least four inches or longer; Commission has the ability to refine the point.

Quentin Kujala, text in the regulation applies to trophy restitution, not just definition of spike and brow-tined bull.

Chairman Vermillion strongly discourages changing the antler point definition.

Commissioner Wolfe and Vore discussed the number of hunters and associated harvest for HD 313.

Chairman Vermillion stated he is strongly supportive of getting the number of hunters down, however, if 313 becomes first and only choice, your forcing Montanans to make a difficult decision.

Commissioner Wolfe stated with the four inch definition of a point he has a hard time supporting a six-point regulation; would cause problems for people in the field; respectively declined to second the motion.

Vice-Chairman Stuker stated he will not offer another motion unless another Commissioner wishes to offer a friendly amendment; asked the Department to put a placeholder on HD 313 to re-evaluate next year and make changes if needed.

Vice-Chairman Stuker asked what happens if the six-point regulation is put in place for the last two weeks of the season instead of adopting the 50 permits; if a check station is open, information could be beneficial for the future use.

Vore stated the Department is reluctant of point restrictions for numerous reasons; migration usually happens the last two weeks, numerous hunters and potential illegal activity.

Director Hagener stated the Commission can request a check station, but with the Departments budget constraints it would be difficult to staff.

Due to no one seconding the motion and no amendment was made, Vice-Chairman Stuker withdrew his amended motion.

Amended Motion: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the amended motion for purposes of discussion, to amend the motion to eliminate the 30 antlerless youth tags from this proposal.

Commissioner Wolfe asked why there are 30 antlerless youth tags and 30 B licenses.

Vore stated the Department heard from the public they would like more antlerless opportunity for youth and other hunters; the Department has no concern if the numbers are lowered.

Chairman Vermillion and Commissioner Wolfe discussed the management reason for the 60 B licenses.

Amended-Amended Motion: Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded to amend the amend motion to eliminate the 313-00 youth-only B licenses and change 313-01 B licenses to a antlerless permit.

Chairman Vermillion and Commissioner Tourtlotte discussed why the 60 B licenses where included in the proposal and was it a brucellosis mitigation factor.

Vice-Chairman Stuker explained his concerns with the B licenses.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment as it relates to the B licenses and B permits motion.

Sandy Sallee, Emigrant, supports amended motion.

Representative Alan Redfield, HD 59, appreciates looking at the brucellosis aspect; makes a difference anytime youth can be helped; need to look at the whole picture.

Chairman Vermillion and Scott Salle discussed the amended-amended motion.

Nick Gevok, MWF, would like to see some youth opportunity; good for tag holders to have options; same effect has game damage.

Edwin Johnson, Royal Teton Ranch, supports motion to become a permit.

Kathryn QannaYahu, EMWH, killing more cows does not do anything for the bulls; no cases of brucellosis transmission in HD 313; need to ask Region 3 for information on the check-station.

Chairman Vermillion stated the Commission will refrain from discussing the check station since the Commission does not have authority.

J.W. Westman, LRGC, would like to see youth opportunity; youth hunters are the future.

Commissioner Wolfe stated he is trying to figure a way to provide a hunting opportunity, but reduce the ability for a person to shoot a cow and a bull, and provide the antlerless opportunity for the management needs that have been identified related to brucellosis.

Commissioner Wolfe withdrew his amended-amended motion.

Amended-Amended Motion: Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded to amend the amended motion to change the 313-00 youth only B licenses to youth only antlerless permits and change 313-01 B licenses to antlerless permits.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

J.W. Westman, LRGC, can live with the amended motion.

Chairman Vermillion stated this has been a difficult conversation for everyone involved; it is important to remember this is not Karen Loveless's proposal, it is the Departments and Commissions proposal; the Department and Commission are trying to get this elk district back to general brow-tined bull or antlered opportunity for the five-week season so everyone has the opportunity to do so. Department has done a remarkable job managing elk thanks to a collaborative effort between the outfitting community, local sportsmen, Department biologists, Commission and the Legislature. Thanked Karen Loveless and the Department for providing the science and doing the hard work that was necessary to address the public concerns; the Commission did a good job of listening to public comment.

Vice-Chairman Stuker stated it has been a process and it is a compromise, unfortunately he does not believe it will not meet the objectives; hope he is wrong, will support the motion today.

Action on Motion and Amended-Amended Motion: Motions passed.

Commissioner Kerstein recused himself from the meeting.

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained there are no changes from the tentative proposal for the following HDs:

Region 2

All R2 HDs with elk B licenses: Eliminate the stipulation that a B License holder may not take an antlered bull in that HD.

- HD 200: Change 200-00 B licenses to antlerless permits (quota 5, range 5-100). Holders may not hunt antlered elk in HD 200.
- HD 201: Change B licenses to antlerless permits and increase quota, 201-00 from 60 to 85 (range 5-300) and 201-01 from 30 to 50 (range 5-100). Non-youth holders may not hunt antlered elk in HD 201.
Change 201-00 and General License youth opportunity from only valid on private land to only valid in Ninemile/Sixmile area (subdistrict 201-00).
Add antlerless to general license for all HD 201 for archery only season.
- HD 202: Change 202-00 B licenses to antlerless permits (quota 15, range 5-100). Holders may not hunt antlered elk in HD 202.
- HDs 211/213/214/216: Convert existing B licenses to permits at existing levels. Non-youth holders may not hunt antlered elk in that HD.
- HD 260: Add 260-00 B License (quota 20, range 1-75). 1st choice only. Private land only. ArchEquip, shotgun, traditional handgun, muzzleloader, or crossbow only. Not valid west of Highway 93 in Missoula County.
Change general license to include the area west of Hwy 93.
- HD 261: Change private land description for the 261-01 B licenses from "Private land only." to "Only valid outside the National Forest boundary and NOT valid on Calf Creek WMA."
Establish quota range for 261-01 B licenses (currently undefined) of 10-200.
- HD 262: Add general license opportunity so that archers can harvest antlerless elk 8/15-01/15. Establish 262-01 B license quota range (currently undefined) at 10-300.
Adjust boundary.

Region 3

HDs 300, 302 & 328 (Tendoy EMU); 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327 & 330 (Gravelly EMU); and 320 & 333 (Tobacco Root EMU) (12 HDs total):

- Remove 300-00, 302-00, 320-00 and 328-00 B licenses.
Establish 399-00 B License (quota 500, range 400-1000) valid during archery and general season in all 12 HDs.
Move the Tendoy EMU (HDs 300, 302 & 328) general season from BTB to BTB/antlerless.
Maintain the 6-week BTB/antlerless archery season.
Maintain either-sex youth opportunity in the Tendoy EMU.
- HD 301/309: Establish 395-00 B licenses (quota 100, range 25-500) not valid on National Forest lands during archery and general seasons to address game damage in Gallatin Valley.
- HD 311: Establish 311-00 B licenses (quota 500, range 100-1000) not valid on National Forest lands.
- HD 314: Establish youth-only brow-tined bull or antlerless south of Big Creek.
- HDs 318/335: Delete existing 318-00 and 335-00 B licenses in these HDs.
Include these HDs in the 394-00 antlerless permit (quota 800, range 200-2000) bundle valid in HDs 215, 318, and 335 during both archery and rifle season. Non-youth holders may not hunt antlered elk in any of these HDs.
- HD 360/362: Rename 360-01 B License to 398-00 for consistency where B licenses and/or permits are valid in 2 or more HDs.
Eliminate mandatory phone reporting requirement for harvest in these HDs. The requirement is poorly adhered to and yields poor, redundant data.
- HD 380: Portion description change. Expand South Portion to include the area outside the National Forest Boundary between Muskrat Creek and Prickly Pear Creek.

HD 392: Remove 392-01 B license.
Change 392-00 B license to be valid entire redefined HD.
Reduce 392-00 quota from 300 to 75 and range from 50-400 to 50-250.
Boundary change in 392: South boundary moves north from Duck Cr. to Magpie/Avalanche Cr. to accommodate new definitions of HDs 391 & 392.
Boundary change in 392: Northeast boundary changes to put the upper reaches of Beaver Creek that are next to Jim Ball Basin and Elk Ridge into HD 446 to facilitate elk management in the way that elk use the area. Most elk that use this area are associated with HD 446.

Region 4

HD 416: Remove 416-00 B license – not used much and will decrease pressure on limited public land.

HD 426: Eliminate the 426-20 ES permit.
Create general license either-sex opportunity during both archery and rifle seasons.
Remove HD 426 as a valid HD from the 900-20 (Archery Bundle).
Remove HD 426 as a valid HD from the 900-00 LPT.

HD 442: Reduce 442-00 quota range minimum from 100 to 50.

HD 455: Adjust the HD boundary after addition of Whitetail Prairie to the Beartooth WMA.

Region 7

All R7: Create 007-00 B-License (quota 500, range 500-1500) valid archery and general. Not valid on National Forest lands or CMR Refuge.

HD 701: Simplify the regulations referring to the southwest portion of the HD by removing the language, "Valid in portion of HD 701 north of Yellowstone River, south of Hwy 12 and west of Sumatra-Myers Rd." It is not needed.
Change the archery-only and general elk regulation in the southwest portion of the HD north of the Yellowstone River, south of Hwy 12 and west of Sumatra-Hysham Rd from antlerless elk to spike bull or antlerless elk to match the regulation in adjacent HD 590. The rest of the HD will remain Either-sex.

HD 702, 704 & 705: Increase 799-20 Either-sex permit from 175 to 225.

Change language for general season in these HDs from "Only valid outside National Forest Administrative boundary. Boundary maps available at: Forest Service Office in Ashland; FWP-R7 HQ 406-234-0900 in Miles City; License Providers in area; and on FWP website." to "Not valid on National Forest Lands"

Regions 4, 5 & 7

HDs 401, 403, 411, 412, 426, 447, 450, 500, 502, Portion of 510 west of HWY 310, 511, Portion of 520 North and west of West Fork of Rock Creek, 530, 540, 560, 570, 575, 580, Portion of 590 north of Yellowstone River, 701 north of Yellowstone River, south of HWY 12 and west of Sumatra-Myers Road, 702, 704 and 705:

Eliminate 900-00 B licenses. It is redundant, undersubscribed, underused, and doing so would simplify the regulations.

Action: *Commissioner Tourtlotte moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the motion that the Commission approve Fish, Wildlife and Parks proposals on the Master List pages 1-3 as proposed.*

Commissioners, Vore and Gary Bertellotti, Region 4 Supervisor had a lengthy discussion on the HD 426 proposal.

Amended Motion: *Commissioner Tourtlotte moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded to amend the motion that the Commission approve Fish, Wildlife and Parks Master List pages 1-3 as proposed, with the exception of HD 426.*

Commissioners, Director Hagener and Vore discussed HD 426 and HD 500.

Amended-Amended Action: *Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Tourtlotte seconded to amend the amended motion to change the quota range from 10 to 60 for HD 500.*

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Action on Motion and Amended Motions: *Motions Passed.*

Action: *Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the motion that the Commission approve Fish, Wildlife and Parks recommendations for HD 426.*

Action on Motion: *Motion Failed 2-2.*

Aye - Vice-Chairman Stuker and Commissioner Wolfe

Nay – Chairman Vermillion and Commissioner Tourtlotte

Action: *Chairman Vermillion moved and Commissioner Tourlotte seconded the motion that the Commission change the quota range for HD 426 to 5 to 120 and increase the number of bull permits to 80.*

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Ron Moody, Lewistown, good number, keep it under a limited number regime; adjustments can be made; problem is with private landowners.

Nick Gevok, MWF, supports motion.

J.W. Westman, LRG, do not go to general licenses, leave on permit; landowners need help but they need to help themselves also.

Chairman Vermillion stated there is a lot of support and faith in the effectiveness of the Lewiston Biologist, who is working closely with the landowners. Inclined to amend the motion to remove the specific permit level and let the Department set. This is to keep the permit structure in place, key to solving the problem.

Amended Action: *Chairman Vermillion moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded to amend the motion to remove "and increase the number of bull permits to 80" from the original motion.*

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment on the amended motion.

Kathryn QannaYahu, EMWH, HD 426 has significant outfitting; issues with mule-deer proposal versus and elk proposal.

Chairman Vermillion stated the Commission has given the Department plenty of latitude to address this game damage issue through the permit structure; happy to amend in December if this proposal does not work.

Vice-Chairman Stuker stated he will support this motion, likes the other motion better but realizes a compromise is needed to get something done.

Chairman Vermillion restated the intent of the motion: retain the permit system during the general season for antlered bull elk and to change the quota range to 5 to 120, giving Region 4 the discretion to set the permit level within that range without coming back to the Commission. HD 426 will stay as the 900-20 archery bundle as well.

Action on Motion and Amended Motion: Motions Passed.

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained the following are minor changes from the tentative proposal (yellow highlight are changes which resulted from public comment and/or further consideration by staff):

Statewide: Require a person to already have a Bow and Arrow license when applying for any archery-only deer, elk or antelope license or permit, e.g. the antelope 900-20 archery license, the Breaks 900-20 archery elk permit, the Bitterroot 260-01 deer B License. Because of bowhunter education limitations for 2016 this will be phased in to begin in 2017. The unlimited elk and deer permit application deadline of March 15th will be strictly adhered to. There will be no sale of unlimited elk or deer permits after March 15th.

Region 2

HD 212: Establish new HD 217 Douglas Cr Rock Cr to Boulder Cr in north part of HD 212. Define new portions of redefined HD 212. Remove 212-45 brow-tined bull permits. These are for an area that is to be HD 217. Season will be brow-tined bull or antlerless during archery, brow-tined bull for general season with an antlerless youth opportunity, and a brow-tined bull or antlerless opportunity running to January 01 on the Prison Ranch. Remove 212-03 B license.

Convert 212-00 and 212-01 B licenses to permits at existing levels valid in the new portions. Non-youth holders may not hunt antlered elk in HD 212.

HD 250: Increase bull permits from 25 to 40 35.

HD 270: Change existing B licenses to antlerless permits at current levels and establish quota ranges as follows (establishing ranges was an oversight when these were established):

- 270-00 (Rye north): 10-200.
- 270-01 (Rye north youth): 10-200.
- 270-02 (East Fork): 10-400.
- 270-03 (East Fork youth): 10-400.
- 270-04 (west of 93): 5-100.
- 270-05 (west of 93 youth): 5-100.

HD 281: Establish 281-00 B license during archery and general season (quota 25, range 5-150), valid east of the North Fork of the Blackfoot River on private land only.

Establish 281-01 antlerless permit (quota 50, range 5-100) only valid west of the North Fork of the Blackfoot River during archery and general seasons. Holders may not hunt antlered elk in HD 281.

HD 285: Remove 285-02 B license.

Establish antlerless harvest opportunity for youth ages 12-15 and Permit To Hunt From a Vehicle (PTHFV).

HD 293: Remove 293-00 B license.

Establish new Southern Portion of HD 293.

Include in the 396-00 antlerless permit bundle for HDs 339, 343 and southern portion of 293 (quota 600, range 200-1500) valid archery and general seasons. Holders may not hunt antlered in any of these HDs.

Establish 293-00 antlerless permit 9 quota 150, range 50-500) valid in southern portion of HD 293. Holders may not hunt antlered elk in HD 293.

Region 3

HD 329: Move to a brow-tined bull/antlerless general season.

HDs 293, 339 & 343 (Granite Butte EMU):

Remove 293-00, 339-00, 343-00 B licenses from these 3 HDs.

Establish new Southern Portion of HD 293.

Establish 396-00 antlerless permits for HDs 339, 343 and southern portion of 293 (quota 600, range 200-1500) valid archery and general seasons. Non-youth holders may not hunt antlered elk in any of these HDs.

HD 340: Remove 340-00 B licenses.

Establish 340-10 brow-tined or antlerless permits (quota 450 250, range 50-400) valid archery and general seasons.

Increase antlerless opportunity on general license from first week to first 2 weeks.

HD 350/370: Increase antlerless opportunity on general license from first week to brow-tined bull/antlerless entire archery and general season in each HD.

Rename 370-00 B License to 399-01 for consistency where B licenses and/or permits are valid in 2 or more HDs.

Region 4

All R4 HDs except HD 410: Increase quota range for the 004-00 B license from 2200-5000 to 2200-6000 because of increased interest due to shoulder seasons.

HD 425: Eliminate the opportunity that holders of any of the 425-00 through 425-05 B licenses can take a 2nd antlerless elk with general license.

Action: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Tourtlotte seconded the motion that the Commission approve Fish, Wildlife and Parks proposals on the Elk Master List pages 4-5 as proposed.

Commissioner Wolfe stated he would like to offer an amendment to the motion.

Amended Action: Commissioner Wolfe moved and Chairman Vermillion seconded to amend the motion to convert all Region 1 B licenses to antlerless permits beginning with the 2017 season.

Commissioner Wolfe explained his reasoning for the amendment.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Ed Grady, Canyon Creek Rancher, the Department did not talk to the landowners regarding HD 293, 339 and 343 proposals; glad it was removed from proposal.

Allen Schallenberger, Sheridan, request to cut back HD 425 permits the last three weeks of the season.

Chairman Vermillion, Commissioner Wolfe, Vore, and Bertellotti, discussed HD 425 proposal.

Action on Motion and Amended Motion: Motions passed.

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained the following 2016-17 performance based shoulder seasons with changes from the tentative adoptions, all other season components except calendar rotation are proposed unchanged from 2015. The Department is under state statute to manage population objective. As per the shoulder season guidelines, adoption of any shoulder season includes a sunset date and the Commission retains full authority to close any season within 48 hours or less based on field inputs.

(Blue highlights are proposed shoulder seasons. Yellow highlights are changes to FWP's original proposals that resulted from public comment and/or further consideration by staff):

Shoulder Seasons

Statewide: With the exception of Regions 1 and 2, no shoulder season would take place during the general archery season. In all other HDs shoulder seasons may occur from 8/15 to the start of archery season, the day after archery closes to February 15.

Region 1

HD 101/109: **Establish early shoulder season** to address game damage primarily in the Tobacco Plains area with 50 199-00 B-licenses (range 5-100) for antlerless elk valid on private land only excluding Plum Creek, Stimpson, and Stoltze Timber lands 8/15-10/16.

Action: Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt FWP's proposal for HD 101 and HD 109.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Neil Jacobson, Lakeside, give landowners a kill permit; motion will not accomplish goal; don't put it onto the sportsmen.

Vice-Chairman Stuker stated he worries about the archery/rifle overlap; would like to look at it again next year.

Commissioner Wolfe explained this area is all small private lands, excludes corporate timberlands; history of multiple game damage hunts; there is precedent for having rifle hunters in the field already; the goal is to move the elk off the hay fields and back onto public lands.

Chairman Vermillion stated he shares Vice-Chairman Stuker's concerns, these HDs have a limited number of B licenses in a confined area he will support; should be able to effectively manage the interaction between rifle and archery hunters.

Commissioner Tourtlotte states he concurs with Chairman Vermillion and Vice-Chairman Stuker; with the way Region 1 has been outlined and Commissioner Wolfe's approval, he will reluctantly support.

Action on Motion: Motion passed.

Region 2

John Vore, Game Management Bureau chief explained staff has spent a lot of time talking with landowners and the majority support the opportunity for shoulder seasons; many management and game damage hunts and have not addressed the problem appropriately; only limited B licenses; September 3 to October 16 is a rich time to harvest elk.

Commissioner Tourtlotte stated he will defer to Commissioner Wolfe but does not support rifle/archery season overlap; received numerous letters from archers who are upset with these proposals and state it will hurt their hunting.

Vore stated these areas are largely private landowners; heard from archers that this will improve archery hunting on public land and National Forest land.

HD 210:

Remove 210-00 B licenses.

Remove 210-01 B licenses (Only valid on private land).

Define northern and a southern portions.

Establish Shoulder Season

Add 210-02 antlerless permits (quota 50-200, range 5-500 50-1000) for archery and general. **Only valid in southern portion of HD 210.** Non-youth holders may not hunt antlered elk in HD 210.

Add 210-03 B licenses (quota 200, range 5-1000) valid August 15 to January 1. Only valid in southern portion of HD 210, outside of the National Forest Boundary.

Add 210-04 antlerless permits (quota 150, range 5-1000) for archery and general. **Only valid in northern portion of HD 210.** Non-youth holders may not hunt antlered elk in HD 210.

Add 210-05 B licenses (quota 400, range 5-1000) valid August 15 to January 1. Only valid in northern portion of HD 210, outside of the National Forest Boundary.

HDs 212/213:

Establish Shoulder Season

Establish 296-00 B licenses (quota 200, range 50-400) valid in South of Rock Cr Portion HD 212 and district-wide in HD 213 outside the National Forest boundary and outside FWP Wildlife Management Areas from December 1 - February 15.

HDs 215, 318 & 335 (Deer Lodge EMU):

Remove the 215-00, 215-01, 318-00, 335-00 B licenses in these HDs.

Establish 394-00 antlerless permit (quota 800, range 200-2000) valid in HDs 215, 318, and 335 during both archery and rifle season. Non-youth holders may not hunt antlered elk in any of these HDs.

Establish Shoulder Season in HD 215 with 215-02 OTC B licenses not valid on USFS or the Spotted Dog WMA valid August 15 - February 15.

HD 217 – New HD:

A new HD created from the north part of HD 212 between ~~Douglas~~ Boulder Cr. and Rock Cr.

~~Establish Shoulder Season~~

Establish 217-00 OTC B licenses valid on private land only from August 15 to ~~end of general season and valid district-wide from December 1~~ - February 15.

Establish 217-10 ~~either-sex~~ brow-tined bull or antlerless permits (quota ~~400~~ 175, range 5-200) valid in archery and general season.

Establish 217-11 ~~either-sex~~ brow-tined bull or antlerless permits for youth only (quota 25, range 5-200) valid in archery and general season.

Establish General License for HD 217 as follows:

ArchEquip only for antlerless elk August 15 - February 15.

~~No general firearms season.~~

Youth and PTHFV opportunity any weapon for antlerless elk valid August 15 - ~~January 15~~ 10/21 on private land and district-wide October 22 - February 15.

Mandatory reporting of any elk harvest in HD 217.

HD 290&298:

~~Establish Shoulder Season~~

Change 298-00 to 299-00 B-license (changed LPT as per convention for those valid in multiple districts) from

drawing only to OTC, unlimited, one per hunter, valid in HDs 290 & 298 August 15 - February 15.

HD 291:

~~Establish Shoulder Season~~

Remove 291-00 B License.

Establish 291-01 (quota 400, range 5-2000) only valid on private land August 15 to February 15.

Establish 291-02 antlerless permits (quota 100, range 5-2000) valid district-wide during archery and general rifle

seasons. Holders may not hunt antlered elk in HD 291.

HDs 291&298:

~~Remove 291-00 B License.~~

~~Establish Shoulder Season. Establish 299-00 B license (quota 400, range 5-2000) valid in HDs 291 & 298 valid~~

~~August 15 - January 1 and not valid on BLM land.~~

HD 292:

~~Establish Shoulder Season~~

Establish 292-00 antlerless permit B License (quota ~~300~~ 200, range 5-500) valid only on private land in the Blackfoot watershed August 15 - November 27.

Remove either-sex on private land on general license and make it brow-tined bull entire HD.

Chairman Vermillion asked what are the archers saying about the proposals and is it critical for the success of shoulder seasons to have rifle season opened during archery season.

Randy Arnold, Region 2 Supervisor, explained once the public meetings concluded and he met one-on-one with archers to discuss specifically, where the rifle/archery season would overlap on private land; still did not like the overlap but there was an understanding in the areas being addressed, it is specific to private landowners with agricultural situations.

Chairman Vermillion asked how critical it is having the shoulder season during archery season to accomplish the Departments goal.

Arnold stated in HD 292 shoulder season is critical; the Department feel very strongly in areas above objective, an application of pressure starting August 15 to February 15 will create a harvest needed to get elk back to objective.

Chairman Vermillion and Arnold discussed shoulder seasons versus game damage hunts, and where the elk move after archery season.

Commissioner Wolfe stated he has been engaged with Region 2 and they have held collaborative meetings and had several conversations with numerous parties and individuals.

Action: Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt FWP's elk recommendations for Region 2 as presented on pages 6 and 7.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Rod Bullis, HHA, need to clarify for private land only; has issues with HD 298 proposal; need to identify the portion east of highway 141; end season in January, not February.

Tim Aldrich, Missoula, collaborative effort to achieve objective by all parties; supports proposal.

Matt Gravely, Rocky Mountain Stockgrowers Association (RMSGa), supports idea of shoulder season; not convinced it will be the answer but something needs to be done; Commission will get backlash from landowners if Commission does not endorse proposal.

Chairman Vermillion asked Gravely if he and other landowners were ready for the burden that comes with public hunting for six months.

Gravely stated yes, need to be ready; landowners welcome the opportunity.

Brian Quigley, RMSGA, supports proposal; need to distribute elk onto public land; hunters need to learn to get along with landowners.

Commissioner Wolfe stated he read Bullis's letter and passed the request to Region 2; asked Mike Thompson to respond.

Mike Thompson, Region 2 Wildlife Manager, archery overlap shoulder season will only be allowed for private land only; there is no biological concern for HD 298, could be changed; landowners are in support of proposal.

Commissioner Wolfe, Thompson and Bullis discussed HD 298.

Commissioner Wolfe stated the Commission would like a placeholder for the Department to come back next year, re-evaluate and adjust, if needed.

Vore explained there will be annual performance reviews posted on the website and all shoulder seasons have a sunset date of 2019, unless any changes are made earlier.

Chairman Vermillion, Commissioner Wolfe, Commissioner Tourlotte, Vore and Thompson discussed HD 292 proposal.

Commissioner Tourlotte stated he is uncomfortable with having an elk season that extends into February; would prefer to end shoulder season on Sunday, January 1; start out slow.

Commissioner Wolfe, Director Hagener and Thompson discussed the impact of shortening the shoulder season, reaching objective, and the likely hood of having a game damage hunt if dates were changed.

Chairman Vermillion stated in his experience the most successful shoulder season has been before the general season; will not substitute his judgment for Commissioner Wolfe or Region 2 expertise; understands legislative mandate.

Commissioner Wolfe stated he personally does not like the concept of hunting elk in August, January or February, but willing to support.

Action on Motion: Motion passed.

Vore stated the Department does not like the season length either, but the Department is mandated by law to manage the elk population. Several of the following shoulder seasons are proposed to end February 15; many HDs are way over objective and need to be aggressive in harvesting elk.

Region 3

HD 312:

Establish Shoulder Season

Remove 312-00 B-license.

Include in the OTC 397-00 B License bundle (HDs 312, 390, 393) Valid September 3 - October 16 for archery only and October 22 - February 15 for rifle. Not valid on National Forest lands.

HD 390:

Establish Shoulder Season

Remove 390-00 B licenses.

Include in the OTC 397-00 B license bundle (HDs 312, 390, 393) Valid September 3 - October 16 for archery only and October 22 - February 15 for rifle. Not valid on National Forest lands.

~~General season to go from brow-tined bull or antlerless for the entire season to brow-tined bull or antlerless for the first 4 weeks and antlerless only for the last week to match neighboring HD 391.~~

General license shoulder season for antlerless elk November 28 - February 15 not valid on National Forest land

HD 391:

Establish shoulder season

Establish 391-00 B license (quota 350, range 100-600) not valid on USFS lands.

General season to go from brow-tined bull to brow-tined bull or antlerless for the entire season.

Boundary change in 391: east boundary moves west to Belt Mountains divide to accommodate new HD 451 and north boundary move north from Duck Cr. to Magpie/Avalanche Cr. to accommodate new definitions of HDs 391 & 392.

HD 393:

Establish Shoulder Season

Remove 393-01 B licenses

Include in the OTC 397-00 B License bundle (HDs 312, 390, 393) Valid September 3 - October 16 for archery only and October 22 - February 15 for rifle. Not valid on National Forest lands.

General license shoulder season for antlerless elk 11/28-2/15 not valid on National Forest land.

Action: Chairman Vermillion moved and Commissioner Tourlotte seconded the motion that the Commission adopt FWP's recommendation for Region 3 as proposed, with the exception of changing the date structure to August 15 through September 2 and November 28 through January 1.

Director Hagener clarified this proposal is for private land only.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Brian McCullough, Helena, and Howard Burt, Region 3 Wildlife Manager, discussed landowner concerns.

Nick Gevok, MWF, after hearing today's conversation he is more optimistic; strongly supports wildlife management; public hunting during general season is the tool for getting herds to objective; prefers the Department and Commission handle wildlife/lands conflicts rather than legislative action; still has concerns over proposal.

Joe Perry, MSA, very specific criteria that needs to be met; go to antlerless only in areas where shoulder seasons does not work; need to get the job done; has concern over the length of hunt, prefers December 31 ending date; encourages sufficient support from landowners.

Jeff Brozovich, G Bar T Ranch, has concerns and strongly opposed to proposal; worried about abortions and calves being too weak to survive; this year was the best season for public relations, a lot of effort by landowners; leave landowners alone.

Weston Munns, Hensley Ranch, this year's elk were managed in an orderly manner; bulls only, increase cow tags; landowners are working together; season proposal starts too early and is too long.

Commissioner Vermillion and Burt discussed how to avoid shoot-outs and a more liberated season and rational for HD 391 proposal.

Chairman Vermillion explained his reasoning for shortening the season length; landowners are concerned.

Vice-Chairman Stuker stated he has heard from landowners in HD 390, 391 and 393 who are concerned with proposal; not convinced a shoulder season should be done at this time; unsure if he can support.

Chairman Vermillion stated there is not a shoulder season proposed in HD 391; landowners in the southern half of HD 393 are supportive.

Action on Motion: Motion Passed.

Region 4

HD 410:

Establish Shoulder Season

During the January 1 - February 15 shoulder season either sex 410-20 permits valid for **ANTLERLESS ELK ONLY** and not valid on CMR.

Increase quota range of 410-00 B license from 200-800 to 200-1000.

410-00 B licenses also valid January 1 - February 15 but not on the CMR.

HD 411:

Establish Shoulder Season

In addition to the archery and general rifle season, the general license valid August 15 - September 2 and November 28 - February 15 but not valid on National Forest lands during the shoulder seasons.

Make 411-00 B License (quota 400, range 100-600) valid in HDs 411, 511, & 530. Valid August 15 - October 16 and October 22 - February 15. Archery-only during archery season.

004-00 B licenses valid August 15 - February 15 but archery-only during archery season. Not valid on National Forest lands or FWP WMAs.

HD 412:

Establish Shoulder Season

for general license, either sex permit (412-20), and antlerless elk license (004-00) holders.

General license shoulder season August 15 - September 2 and November 28 - February 15.

412-20 Either sex permits also valid November 28 - February 15 shoulder seasons for **ANTLERLESS ELK ONLY**.

004-00 B licenses valid September 3 - February 15 August 15 - September 2, September 3 - October 16 archery-

only, and October 22 - February 15.

HD 417:

Establish Shoulder Season

417-20 permits valid November 28 - February 15 for **ANTLERLESS ELK ONLY**. Not valid on CMR.

004-00 B licenses valid September 3 - February 15. Not valid on CMR.

HD 421:

Establish Shoulder Season

for 004-00 B licenses:

August 15 - September 02 Antlerless elk.

September 03 - October 16 - Antlerless elk. Archery Only Season.

October 22 - November 27 - Antlerless elk.

January 01 - February 15 - Antlerless elk.

HD 422:

Establish Shoulder Season

with 422-00 and 004-00 B licenses.

422-00 B License also valid January 1 - February 15 but not valid on National Forest lands during the shoulder season.

004-00 B licenses valid as follows:

September 03 - October 16 - Antlerless elk. Archery Only Season.

October 22 - November 27 - Antlerless elk.

January 01 - February 15 - Antlerless elk.

HD 423:

Establish Shoulder Season

for 004-00 B licenses as follows:

September 03 - October 16 - Antlerless elk. Archery Only Season.

October 22 - November 27 - Antlerless elk.

January 01 - February 15 - Antlerless elk.

HD 445: **Establish Shoulder Season** on the general license as below:

August 15 - **October 21** September 02 - Antlerless elk. Not valid on National Forest land or FWP WMAs.

September 03 - October 16 - Either-sex elk. Archery Equip Only Season.

October 17 - October 21 - Antlerless elk. Not valid on National Forest land or FWP WMAs.

October 22 - November 06 - Either-sex elk.

November 7 - November 27 - Antlerless elk.

November 28 - February 15 - Antlerless elk. Not valid on National Forest land or FWP WMAs.

004-00 B license good August 15 - February 15 **but archery only during archery season** not valid on USFS, FWP WMA's or CMR.

Adjust the HD boundary after addition of Whitetail Prairie to the Beartooth WMA.

HD 446: **Establish Shoulder Season** on the general license as below:

August 15 - **September 02** - Antlerless elk. Not valid on National Forest land or FWP WMAs.

September 03 - October 16 - Brow-tined bull or antlerless elk. Archery Only Season.

October 17 - October 21 - Antlerless elk. Not valid on National Forest land or FWP WMAs.

October 22 - November 27 - Brow-tined bull or antlerless elk.

November 28 - February 15 - Antlerless elk. Not valid on National Forest land or FWP WMAs.

004-00 B license good August 15 - February 15 **but archery only during archery season** not valid on USFS, FWP WMA's or CMR.

Adjust the hunting district 446/392 boundary for deer, elk, mountain lion and furbearer.

Boundary change in 446: Northwest boundary changes to put the upper reaches of Beaver Creek that are next to Jim Ball Basin and Elk Ridge, currently in HD 392, into HD 446 to facilitate elk management in the way that elk use the area. Most elk that use this area are associated with HD 446.

HD 449 & 452: **Establish Shoulder Season** on the general license as below:

August 15 - September 02 - Antlerless elk. Not valid on National Forest land or FWP WMAs.

September 03 - October 16 - Either-sex elk. Archery Equip Only Season.

October 17 - October 21 - Antlerless elk. Not valid on National Forest lands or FWP WMA's.

October 22 - November 27 - Either-sex elk.

November 28 - February 15 - Antlerless elk. Not valid on National Forest land or FWP WMAs.

004-00 B license good August 15 - February 15 **but archery only during archery season** not valid on USFS, FWP WMA's or CMR.

HD 451: New HD. **Establish Shoulder Season** August 15 - February 15 not valid on National Forest lands, FWP WMAs, or CMR.

August 15 - **September 02** - Antlerless elk. Not Valid on National Forest lands or FWP WMAs.

September 03 - October 16 - Brow-tined bull or antlerless elk. Archery Only Season.

October 17 - October 21 - Antlerless elk. Not Valid on National Forest lands or FWP WMAs.

October 22 - November 27 - Brow-tined bull or Antlerless elk.

November 28 - February 15 - Antlerless elk. Not Valid on National Forest lands or FWP WMAs.

004-00 B licenses valid August 15 - February 15 **but archery only during archery season** not valid on National Forest lands, FWP WMAs, or CMR during shoulder seasons.

Vore stated the August 15 to February 15 is very important to maintain harvest.

Vice-Chairman Stuker asked if the early season, with the exception of a small portion, was private land only.

Vice-Chairman Stuker and Graham Taylor, Region 4 Wildlife Manager, discussed how much public land is included in the shoulder season areas, HD 411 objective levels, and changing HD 411 east and west boundaries.

Chairman Vermillion stated the middle portion of HD 411 is owned by the Wilkes brothers; how will the Department deal with the middle portion of that area that is closed.

Taylor stated with continued conversation with the N Bar Ranch, there may be some opportunities in HD 411 and HD 530.

Director Hagener and Bertellotti discussed HD 410 and 417 objective numbers.

Chairman Vermillion and Taylor discussed objective numbers for numerous HDs.

Vice-Chairman Stuker stated he appreciates Region 4 staff working with the landowners and proposing shoulder seasons in areas where they have received cooperation, and not proposing shoulder seasons in areas where there is not a lot of landowner support.

Action: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Tourtlotte seconded the motion that the Commission approve Region 4 proposals as presented by FWP.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comments.

Brian McCullough, Helena, hunt coordinators are beneficial; shoulder hunts do move elk from private land onto public land; rural communities benefit from shoulder hunts; Commission actions have created more access.

Ron Moody, Lewiston, good action to remove HD 410 and 417 from proposal; Region 4 staff tried to engage the rural community; HD 411 is a factor of geography.

Bill Galt, White Super Springs, supports shoulder season; had a pilot project shoulder season hunt on his property and was a huge success; benefits the community.

Nick Gevok, MWF, everyone is agreeing to help put elk back on public ground; data collection is essential; sounds like the Department is committed to redoing the elk plan.

Jay Bodner, MSGA, supports proposal; good conversations; positive direction between the Department and landowners.

Chairman Vermillion stated he will support reluctantly; proposing a shoulder season in HD 411, where there might be problems with the landowners in the middle.

Commissioner Tourtlotte stated he doesn't support the length of the shoulder season, but will defer to his colleague; nice to hear the pilot program has been successful in some areas; best not to overlook the performance criteria.

Vice-Chairman Stuker stated this will need to be revisited next year.

^^Action on Motion: Motion passed. (See additional motion below)

Region 5

All R5 (except HD 500):

502, Portion of 510 west of HWY 310, 511, Portion of 520 north and west of West Fork of Rock Creek, 530, 540, 560 Portion north of Falls Creek, 570, 575, 580, Portion of 590 north of Yellowstone River.

Establish Shoulder Season with general license:

August 15 - ~~October 21~~ September 2 - Antlerless elk. Private land only.

September 3 - October 16 - Either-sex or spike bull/antlerless (depending on HD). Archery only.

October 17 - October 21 - Antlerless elk. Private land only.

October 22 - November 27 - Either-sex or spike bull/antlerless (depending on HD).

November 28 - February 15 - Antlerless elk. Private land only.

005-00 B licenses (1200) valid 8/15-2/15 but archery-only during archery season, valid on private land only.

Individual R5 HD B licenses as below:

Valid district wide in each HD to address situations where elk are expected to concentrate on National Forest lands adjacent to private lands and be otherwise unavailable for harvest. Valid September 3 - October 16 Archery only then October 22 - February 15.

HD 502 & 510 portion:

Create 502-01 B licenses (quota 50, range 5-150).

HD 511 & 530: 411-00 B licenses valid (quota 400, range 100-600).

HD 520: Create 520-01 B licenses (quota 50, range 5-150).

Increase the 520-20 ES permit quota range from 25-30 to 25-50.

HD 540: Create 540-01 B licenses (quota 100, range 50-300).

HD 560: Create 560-01 B licenses (quota 100, range 50-300).

HD 570: Create 570-01 B licenses (quota 50, range 5-150).

HD 575: Create 575-01 B licenses (quota 50, range 5-150), increase either-sex 575-20 quota range from 10-15 to 10-50.

HD 580: Create 580-01 B licenses (quota 100, range 50-300).

HD 590: Create 590-01 B licenses (quota 100, range 50-300).

Commissioner Tourtlotte is glad Region 5 addressed the archery concerns; will recommend shortening the season.

Action: Commissioner Tourtlotte moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the motion that the Commission adopt Region 5 proposal as set forth on page 10 of the elk master list, with the exception of changing the season date to November 28 – January 1.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Rita Bracha (via J.W. Westman), Rygate, does not believe in shoulder hunts.

Tom Madden, Billings, concerned about objectives; need to be revisited.

J.W. Westman, LRGC, shoulder season are predicated on performance based criteria; who will be recording the data; opposes proposal; all interested parties need to be involved.

^^Graham Taylor, Region 4 Wildlife Manager, explained HDs 411, 511, and 530 are boundary lines for the Snowy Mountains; consider changing the termination for date HD 411 and 412 to similar dates as 511 and 530.

Commissioner Tourlotte stated he is inclined to leave the motion the way it is and adjust next year.

Vice-Chairman Stuker stated he would like to leave HD 411 as is, but willing to cooperate and ask Commission Tourlotte to split the difference and end on January 15.

Commissioner Tourlotte agreed with Vice-Chairman Stuker to change the ending date.

Amended Action: Commissioner Tourlotte moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded to amend the motion to change HD 511 and 530 late shoulder season date to terminate on January 15.

Brian McCullough, Helena, hunt coordinator can help with the success in these areas.

Rod Bullis, Helena Hunters and Anglers (HHA), appreciates and respects the effort on all parties; tough issue.

Nick Gevock, MWF, significant access issues to public lands in the Crazy Mountains; proposal for HD 580 is not ready.

J.W. Westman, LRGC, cares deeply about outdoor traditions and will never stop fighting for them.

Chairman Vermillion stated the over objective situation in HD 580 is beyond the Departments and Commissions control.

Action on Amended Motion: Motion Passed.

^^Action: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Tourlotte seconded the motion to change HD 411 and 412 late shoulder season date to terminate on January 15.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

^^Action on Motion: Motion Passed.

Region 6

HD 680 & 690:

Establish Shoulder Season.

Create 696-00 B license (quota 100, range 100-500) valid 12/15-12/31 in both HDs. ~~Not valid on CMR Refuge.~~

Create antlerless elk permit 697-00 (quota 100, range 100-300) valid during archery and general seasons in both HDs.

Only valid on private land outside of Block Management Areas.

HDs 620, 621, 622, 630, 631 & 632 (Missouri Breaks EMU):

Establish Shoulder Season

Create 699-00 B license (quota 500, range 100-1000) valid in all HDs 12/15-12/31. Not valid on CMR.

Create 698-00 antlerless permit (quota 300, range 100-500) valid in all HDs during archery and general. Not valid on CMR.

Action: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Tourlotte seconded the motion that the Commission accept Region 6 proposals on page 10 and 11 of the elk master list, as presented by Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

Nick Gevok, MWF, this proposal speaks for the need to look at objectives; time to review the elk plan and look at objectives.

Chairman Vermillion, Vice-Chairman Stuker and Gevok discussed the American Prairie Reserve wishes, objectives and land issues.

Vice-Chairman Stuker stated the Department and landowners worked together to establish the December 31 termination date.

Action on Motion: Motion Passed.

Action: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the motion that the quota ranges and all other 2015 regulations that were not changed today be moved forward.

Action on Motion: Motion Passed.

12. 2016-2017 Elk Districts with Expanded Permission To Hunt From a Vehicle – Final

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained hunters with a Permit To Hunt From a Vehicle (PTHFV) may harvest any legal game from a vehicle. FWP proposes to allow PTHFV holders additional opportunities to harvest antlerless elk in 41 HDs in Regions 2 and 3 where such opportunities are currently not available to a general license holder; the list of proposed HDs has changed slightly from the December proposal because upon review it was found there were already antlerless opportunity in 3 HDs in Region 3. The Region 2 HDs are: 201-00, 204, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 240, 261, 262, 283, 291, 292, and 293. Region 3 HDs are: 300, 301, 302, 317, 318, 319, 328, 329, 331, 332, 334, 335, 339, 340, 341, 343, 350, 360, 361, 370, 380, 388, 391, and 392. If all proposals are adopted there would be antlerless opportunity for any hunter in more HDs and special-opportunity HDs would be reduced by 6 in Region 2 and 7 in Region 3. In 2012, the Blackfoot Access Group (BAG) supported FWP in suspending special privileges for PTHFV holders to hunt antlerless elk, due in part to elk declines on public lands in Region 2 and to loosen criteria for individuals to qualify for a PTHFV, which led to abuse of the hunting privilege. The BAG worked in the 2013 legislative session to restore tighter criteria for issuing the PTHFV and the Commission committed to revisiting the topic of allowing special privileges for PTHFV holders to harvest antlerless elk. Regional wildlife biologists considered elk population status and trends in every HD and predicted the proposed PTHFV opportunity would not contribute to an overharvest in the districts identified. The Region 2 specific proposal was developed in active collaboration with the BAG. The Region 3 portion of the proposal includes HDs that currently do not have a general antlerless opportunity, but do offer a youth opportunity. Public comment ran from December 10 to January 25; 22 comments were received, 9 in favor, 6 opposed and, others spoke to concerns about specific areas and a variety of motorized access issues.

Commissioner Wolfe asked the Department to closely monitor the privilege numbers and report back to the Commission if it starts to be abused.

Action: Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Commission approve FWP's proposal to allow Permit To Hunt From a Vehicle holders, an expanded opportunity to harvest antlerless elk in the listed 41 hunting districts in Regions 2 and 3.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Joe Perry, Conrad, supports motion; agrees with Commissioner Wolfe's request.

Action on Motion: Motion Passed.

13. 2016-2017 Antelope Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries – Final

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, stated the final proposal is unchanged from the tentative proposal (see minutes from the December 10, 2015 Commission meeting). Thirty-seven comments were received; 8 speaking to general support, 1 wanting to expand the 900-20 early archery license opportunity to Region 2 HDs, and others speaking to either increasing or decreasing licenses in specific areas.

**See action below.*

14. 2016-2017 Deer Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries – Final

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained the Department is proposing a late proposal to establish an archery only weapon restriction on the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area. This proposal is based on testimony and comment from the Kalispell season setting public meeting and several comments were sent in by landowners surrounding this area. People have objected to the proposal stating there hasn't been any problems in the past.

Commissioner Wolfe and Vore discussed the weapon restrictions during general and archery season in this area.

Action: Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion to approve the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area to tighten up the weapons restrictions to archery only, during the general season.

Commissioner Wolfe stated he attended the Kalispell meeting; several people attended this meeting who spoke strongly in favor; in the effort to be responsive, Region 1 solicited for public comment; received feedback from the public, some are in favor and quite a few opposed.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Brent Mitchell, Kalispell, opposes proposal.

Kay Mitchell, Kalispell, against motion.

Lorie Hafer, Kalispell, against proposal, should be allowed for all parties.

Jim Vashro, Flathead Wildlife, opposes archery only; no documented problems; need more public discussion.

Tanner Hafer, Kalispell, opposes proposal; taking away from the public.

Del Crawford, Kalispell, opposes proposal.

Greg Cannaday, against motion.

Greg Nelson, Kalispell, opposes motion.

Neil Jacobson, Lakeside, proposal is not about creating an elite area, it is a safety issue; supports proposal.

Lynn Heaps, Kalispell, safety is the main issue; supports motion.

Paul Martin, Montana Bowhunters Association (MBA), change is needed for safety; supports proposal; archery only area would allow a quality hunt.

Roger Anderson, Kalispell, FWP has a good set of rules in place; against proposal.

Kathleen Anderson, Kalispell, never had any issues in 20 years; against proposal.

Gary Collier, Kalispell, against proposal.

Commissioner Wolfe stated the Department did not emanate this proposal; Region 1 was being responsive to public comments received at a public meeting; recommends tabling the motion and come back next year to reevaluate and allow for more public review.

Chairman Vermillion stated there is not enough information for him to make a decision; supports withdrawing the motion.

Commissioner Wolfe withdrew his motion. Commission did not take formal action on the motion.

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained for the 2016 and 2017 mule deer and white-tailed deer season structure, some of the more significant proposed changes include liberalizing seasons. Region 1 is proposing going to antlerless white-tailed deer opportunities the first and last week of the general season, many hunting districts in Regions 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 propose going to either-sex mule deer during the general season, and there are a number of proposed mule deer B License opportunities. Two Hundred Thirty-Four comments were received; over 550 people attended public meetings across the state and provided numerous comments, most spoke to HD-specific concerns; 2/3 of hunters outside of Region 1 mentioned doe harvest favored increased opportunity; among 49 comments on Region 1's either-sex proposal, 18 opposed and 30 favored; a number of comments spoke to buck management. Specific proposed changes are highlighted (for all other changes see the December 10, 2016 Commission file):

Statewide: Require a person to already have a Bow and Arrow License when applying for any archery-only deer, elk or antelope license or permit, e.g. the antelope 900-20 archery license, the Breaks 900-20 archery elk permit, the Bitterroot 260-01 deer B License.
Require a person to already have a deer license when applying for any deer permit, the same as is currently the case for non-resident applicants and for all applicants for elk permits.
The unlimited elk and deer permit application deadline of March 15th will be strictly adhered to. There will be no sale of unlimited elk or deer permits after March 15th.

Region 1 – White-tailed Deer

All R1 HDs except 140/141/150/151/170:

WTD either-sex on general license the first week everywhere and last week on private land only excluding Plum Creek, Stoltz and Stimpson. Rest of the season antlered-buck.

All R1 HDs except 140/141/150/151/170:

Allow antlerless to handicapped hunters with Permission to Hunt From a Vehicle (PTHFV) season-long.

HD 100/103/104: Establish WTD B licenses in each HD (quota 100, range 5-600) in each.

HD 123: Establish WTD B licenses (quota 50, range 25-300).

HD 130: Establish WTD B licenses (quota 50, range 10-1000).

HD 170: Allow antlerless harvest on Kuhns WMA.

Extend B License opportunity until December 15.

Region 2 - Mule Deer

HD 217: New HD, Establish Unlimited Buck permits.

HD 250: Reduce buck permits 40 to 25.

HD 261: Increase 261-50 buck permits 25 to 40 30 valid in HDs 261 & 262.

Establish 261-01 B License (quota 35, range 0-150). Only valid outside the National Forest boundary and NOT valid on Calf Creek WMA.

HD 262: Increase 261-50 buck permits 25 to 40.

Establish 262-01 Antlerless B licenses (quota 50, range 10-200) ArchEquip Only valid August 15 – January 1.
Change boundary to include Florence area, Willow Creek, and Sunset Bench.
Reduce 262-00 B License from 200 to 100 but successful B license applicants may purchase 1 more B. Establish quota range for 262-00 of 25-300.
Add antlerless MD to general tag 8/15-1/1 ArchEquip only .
HD 270: Increase buck permits 45 to 60 No increase – keep at 45.
HD 290: Establish quota range for 290-51 either-species antlered buck B license at 5-100.

Region 2 - White-tailed Deer

HD 201: Change 201-01 B licenses 25 to 15, Change license from private land only to valid in entire 201-01 subdistrict (Four Mile area).

HDs 204/240/250/261/270 (Bitterroot Valley) WTD:

Remove current limited B licenses from HDs 204 (204-01), 240 (240-01), and 261 (261-00).
Remove either-sex harvest during the first week of general rifle season in HDs 240, 250 and 270.
Remove HD 250 from the list of districts valid for the 260-01 license (archery-only, 3 licenses per hunter).
Add new limited B licenses that allow a late season (12/1-1/1) harvest on private land only with special weapons where hunters who draw the license may purchase up to 2 additional licenses as below:
260-02: (quota 100, range 50-400) in HD 260 1st choice only. Not valid west of Highway 93 in Missoula County.
299-00: (quota 400, range 50-500) valid in HDs 204, 240, 261, and 270 (1st and 2nd choice).

HD 210: Establish WTD 210-00 B license (quota 75, range 5-200).

HD 212: Establish WTD 212-01 B license (quota 100, range 5-200). B license holders may purchase a second B license.

HD 213: Establish WTD 213-01 B license (quota 25, range 5-200).

HD 215: Establish WTD 215-01 B license (quota 50, range 5-200).

HD 216: Establish WTD 216-00 B license (quota 25, range 5-200).

HD 217: First nine days ES, rest of the season buck only.

HD 260: Change 260-01 OTC B license from up to 3 per hunter to up to 5 per hunter. Establish a quota range of 1 to 5 for this license.

HD 262: Increase 262-01 OTC ArchEquip only B License from up to 3 per hunter to up to 5 per hunter. Establish a quota range of 1 to 5 for this license.

Increase 262-02 OTC Special Weapons B licenses from 1 per hunter to up to 3 per hunter. Establish a quota range of 1 to 5 for this license.

HD 285: Increase WTD B licenses from 50 to 75.

HD 291: Establish WTD 291-00 B license (quota 50, range 5-200).

HD 292: Increase WTD B licenses from 75 to 100.

Region 3 - Mule Deer

HDs 300/302/320/322/325/326/328/329/330/331/333 (Tendoy & Tobacco Root Mtns):

Remove 75 MD 300-01 B licenses from HD 300.

Remove 200 MD 331-02 B licenses from HD 331.

Remove the unlimited mule deer buck permit 302-50 from HD 302.

Eliminate the three-week mule deer buck season in HDs 320 and 333.

Implement a season-long either-sex mule deer on a general deer license in HDs 300, 302, 320, 322, 325, 326, 328, 329, 330, 331, and 333. With the exception of HDs 300 and 329, which will maintain respective limited and unlimited mule deer buck permit regulations.

HD 309: Reintroduce B license, 309-01 (quota 25, range 25-100).

HD 311: Reintroduce B license, 311-01 (quota 100, range 25-300).

HD 312: Reintroduce B license, 312-01 (quota 50, range 25-200).

HD 313: Reintroduce B license, 313-01 (quota 50, range 25-200).

HDs 318/335/339/343 (Helena Area):

Reintroduce MD B licenses:

318-01 (quota 50, range 25-150).

335-01 (quota 50, range 25-150).

339-01 (quota 50, range 25-200).

343-01 (quota 50, range 25-200).

HD 319: Establish 319-01 B license quota range of 10-100.

HDs 321/334/340/341/350/370 (Butte HDs): Allow ES during archery, implement B licenses:

321-01 (quota 10, range 10-30).

334-01 (quota 10, range 10-30) .

340-01 (quota 50, range 10-200).

341-01 (quota 20, range 10-100).

350-01 (quota 10, range 10-30).

370-01 (quota 10, range 10-30).

HD 380: Reintroduce B licenses 380-02 (quota 50, range 25-200) valid only on private land outside of National Forest Service boundary and on DNRC land.

HD 388, City of Helena:

Helena Urban Deer Plan. Approve removal of 130 deer within the city limits between November 15 and March 31. If the proportion of mature bucks is disproportionately high, allow for an additional 50 deer, bringing the total to 180. We do not recommend the release of any bucks captured in the additional 50 if it is warranted.

HD 390: Reintroduce B licenses 390-01 (quota 50, range 25-200) not valid on National Forest Land.

HD 391: Reintroduce B licenses 391-02 (quota 100, range 25-200) not valid on National Forest Land.

Remove Canyon Ferry WMA Weapons Restriction Area to clean up and reduce complexity. Language is ambiguous and open to interpretation.

Region 3 - White-tailed Deer

HD 301: Remove 301-00 B license. It is redundant and little used.

HDs 320/322/324/325/326/330/333/340/360 (Tobacco Roots, Highlands, Madison):

WTD - Remove individual district B licenses and establish 399-00 OTC B licenses for the bundle, (quota 3, range 1-5 per hunter).

Region 4 - Mule Deer

In 23 of 36 R4 districts – HDs 400/401/403/404/405/406/410/411/412/413/417/419/421/422/423/426/432/442/444/445/447/450/471:

Change from antlered buck mule deer to either-sex.

HDs 422, 423, and 442 for outside National Forest lands only.

HD 401: 401-00 B license reduction, 200 to 100, and establish quota range 100-500.

HD 403: 403-00 B license (valid for either species) reduction, 175 to 75, and establish quota range 25-300.

HD 405: 405-00 B license reduction, 200 to 50, and establish quota range 25-250.

HD 406: Change 406-00 B license to MD only & reduce from 200 to 100 with range 25-500.

HD 413: 413-00 B license reduction, 200 to 50, and establish quota range 5-250.

HD 419: Establish 419-00 B license (quota 25, range 5-100).

HD 426: Establish 426-00 B license (quota 25, range 5-100).

HD 451: New HD carved out of HD 391. Establish antlered buck MD & ES WTD archery and General.

Region 4 - White-tailed Deer

HDs 406/441/450: Establish 495-00 B license (quota 300, range 100-800) valid in all 3 HDs. HD 406 closes 11/13/2016. HDs 441 and 450 close 11/27/2016.

HDs 411/412: Eliminate 411-00 WTD B License.

Establish 497-00 B license (quota 300, range 100-500) valid in both HDs.

HDs 413/445: Establish 496-00 B license (quota 100, range 5-500) valid in both HDs.

HDs 422/444: Eliminate 444-00 B Licenses and establish 498-00 B license (quota 400, range 50-500) valid in both HDs.

HDs 416/446/449/452/454:

Eliminate the current five individual B licenses (416-00, 446-00, 449-00, 452-00 & 454-00) and establish a single 499-00 B license (quota 400, range 50-1500) valid in all 5 HDs to simplify the regulations.

Region 5 - Mule Deer

HDs 500/570/590: Change from antlered buck to either-sex.

Most of R5: Reintroduce B licenses as below:

HD 500: Quota 100, range 5-200.

HD 502: Quota 25, range 5-150.

HD 510: Quota 75, range 5-150, Not valid on National Forest lands.

HD 511: Quota 10, range 5-50, Not valid on National Forest lands.

HD 520: Quota 50, range 5-150, Not valid on National Forest lands.

HD 530: Quota 10, range 5-50, Not valid on National Forest lands.

HD 540: Quota 10, range 5-50, Not valid on National Forest lands.

HD 560: Quota 25, range 5-150, Not valid on National Forest lands.

HD 570: Quota 25, range 5-150.

HD 575: Quota 100, range 5-200.

HD 580: Quota 25, range 5-200, Not valid on National Forest lands.

HD 590: Quota 100, range 5-250.

Region 5 - White-tailed Deer

HDs 500/530/590: Introduce 597-00 B license (quota 200, range 100-800) valid in all 3 HDs. Not valid on National Forest lands

HDs 511/540/570/580:

Reintroduce 598-00 B license (Quota 500, range 400-1000) Valid in all 4 HDs.

Region 6 - Mule Deer

HDs 600/611/621/622:

Go to either-sex on a general license.

HD 620: Establish 620-00 B licenses (quota 50, range 50-500).

HDs 630/631/632: Establish 630-00 B licenses (quota 100, range 100-1000).

HD 650: Establish 650-00 B licenses (quota 50, range 50-500).

HD 640: Establish 640-00 B licenses (quota 100, range 100-900).

HD 651: Establish 651-00 B licenses (quota 100, range 100-500).

HD 670: Establish 670-00 B licenses (quota 200, range 200-2000).

HD 680: Establish 680-00 B licenses (quota 100, range 100-1000).

HD 690: Establish 690-00 B licenses (quota 100, range 100-1000).

Region 6 - White-tailed Deer

All R6 HDs: Introduce OTC 006-00 B licenses, 1 per hunter, valid in all Region 6 HDs.

Region 7 - Mule Deer

All R7 HDs: Go to ES with a general license.

Replace all individual HD B licenses with 007-03 region-wide B license (quota 4500, range 1000-5000) valid in all Region 7 HDs.

Action: *Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Commission adopt the final 2016 and 2017 deer hunting seasons and hunting districts as presented by FWP. I also move to adopt all other portions of the previous 2014-2015 deer season regulations not affected by the Commission's actions today.*

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Action on Motion: *Motion Passed.*

15. 2016-2017 Moose Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries – Final

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, stated the final proposal is unchanged from the tentative proposal (see minutes from the December 10, 2015 Commission meeting). Thirty-seven comments were received that spoke to a variety of issues including support for proposals, low moose numbers, predation, once in a lifetime, reduce licenses in some areas, and increase licenses in some areas.

**See action below.*

16. 2016-2017 Bighorn Sheep Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries – Final

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, stated the final proposal is unchanged from the tentative proposal (see minutes from the December 10, 2015 Commission meeting). Thirty-two comments were received and spoke to once in a lifetime, in favor of eliminating the Gallatin Special Management Area, predators, more opportunity, and options for increased opportunity suggestions in specific HDs.

**See action below.*

17. 2016-2017 Mountain Goat Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries – Final

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, stated this proposal differs from the tentative proposal; FWP is removing the proposal to no longer require a mandatory physical check of harvested goats; mandatory check of harvested goats will remain; all other elements remain unchanged from the December meeting. Thirty-six comments were received; 11 comments spoke to HD 313, all but 2 favored the nanny-only licenses; 25 comments referenced a once in a lifetime license and advocacy for archery-only licenses; seven supported the proposals, six wanted to retain mandatory check, three were in favor of removing the Gallatin Special Management Area, and others spoke to opening new areas.

Action: *Commissioner Wolfe moved and Commissioner Tourtlotte seconded the motion that the Commission adopt the final 2016 and 2017 mountain goat hunting seasons and hunting districts as presented by FWP. I also move to adopt all other portions of the previous 2014-2015 mountain goat season regulations not affected by the Commission's actions today.*

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Action on Motion: *Motion Passed.*

18. 2016-2017 Black Bear Hunting Seasons, Quota Ranges HD Boundaries and Quotas – Final

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, stated the final proposal is unchanged from the tentative proposal (see minutes from the December 10, 2015 Commission meeting). Twenty-Nine comments were received; most asking for more opportunity and mentioning Region 1, Region 5 and Region 7, baiting, a handgun season, and uniform season dates across the state.

**See action below.*

19. 2016-2017 Bison Hunting Seasons and HD Boundaries - Final

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, stated this proposal differs from the tentative proposal; FWP is proposing to drop the cow/calf licenses proposal, retain the either-sex licenses at the current level as the 2015 season quota and instituting mandatory reporting.

All other aspects of the 2015 regulations are to remain unchanged. Fifty comments were received; 26 spoke to wanting more opportunity including opening the season in September; others spoke to regulating tribal harvest, landowner preference, points for the drawing system; 2 were against the proposal.

Action: *Commissioner Tourtlotte moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Commission adopt the final 2016 and 2017 bison hunting seasons and hunting districts as presented by FWP. I also move to adopt all other portions of the previous 2014-2015 bison season regulations not affected by the Commission's actions today.*

Chairman Vermillion asked if HD 385 (back country) season will start on September 15 along with the other back county districts.

Sam Sheppard, Region 3 Supervisor stated HD 385 will open on September 15; regular bison season opens on November 15.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Action on Motion: *Motion Passed.*

20. 2016-2017 Mountain Lion Hunting Seasons and HD Boundaries – Final

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, stated the final proposal is unchanged from the tentative proposal (see minutes from the December 10, 2015 Commission meeting). Thirty-Six comments were received; most requesting an increased lion harvest.

**See action below.*

21. 2016-2017 Upland Game Bird Hunting Seasons, Quotas and HD Boundaries - Final

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, stated this proposal differs from the tentative proposal, changes are: Region 2: Increase fall licenses from 100 to 200 in HD 282-50 and allow the use of rifles and handguns in the fall; Region 3 Special Drawing Turkey licenses: Increase proposed spring 399-20 licenses from 120 to 200 and increase quota range from 25-300 to 25-400, increase proposed fall 399-50 licenses from 145 to 250, and increase proposed quota range to from 25-350 to 25-600. A correction to the draft 2016 spring and fall turkey hunting regulations presented at the December meeting for turkey should have stated: change 400-20 to 5 licenses and 445-20 to 10 licenses. Twenty-Four comments were received; 10 in favor and none opposed; others spoke to wanting turkeys declared a nuisance, offering opportunities in counties that are currently closed, lengthening the upland season and increasing bag limit.

Action: *Commissioner Wolfe moved and Commissioner Tourtlotte seconded the motion that the Commission adopt the final 2016 and 2017 upland bird hunting seasons and hunting districts as presented by FWP. I also move to adopt all other portions of the previous 2014-2015 upland bird season regulations not affected by the Commission's actions today.*

Chairman Vermillion, Vore and Burt discussed the reasoning for Park County regulation changes.

Vice-Chairman Stuker and Vore discussed the turkey population in Red Lodge and what could be done to reduce the numbers; need to communicate with the Red Lodge City Council of what can be done.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Action on Motion: *Motion Passed.*

22. 2016-2017 Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons (contingent upon Federal frameworks) – Final

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, stated the final proposal is unchanged from the tentative proposal (see minutes from the December 10, 2015 Commission meeting). Eleven comments were received; most spoke in support of the proposal; one wanted bonus points for the crane drawing and another wanted the season to be later.

Action: *Commissioner Wolfe moved and Commissioner Tourtlotte seconded the motion that the Commission adopt the final 2016 and 2017 migratory bird hunting regulations as presented by FWP, and to adopt all other portions of the previous 2014-2015 migratory season regulations not affected by the Commission's actions today.*

Action on Motion: *Motion Passed.*

23. 2016 Early Season Migratory Bird Regulations – Proposed

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained migratory bird hunting seasons must be set within federal frameworks established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The FWS started setting regulations earlier and as such, FWP is moving its schedule earlier, with season proposals in February and final approval in April. Mourning dove and common snipe season dates have been September 1 - October 30 for doves, September 1 - December 16 for snipe, with fixed bag/possession limits from year to year; no changes are proposed for the 2016 mourning dove and common snipe seasons. The Rocky Mountain Population (RMP) of sandhill cranes is annually monitored, with individual states' allowable harvest quotas based on observed three-year average numbers; Montana crane numbers and hunter access have been used to set permit numbers for the Dillon/Twin Bridges/Cardwell/Bozeman, Warm Springs area, Ovando-Helmville, Wheatland/Meagher/Golden Valley/portion of Sweetgrass Counties, and Broadwater County; a sixth RMP

crane hunting area, Carbon County, has been approved by the Commission, with 15 hunters to be issued one permit each for the 2016 season. Montana's RMP harvest allocation for 2016 will likely increase, but FWP proposes maintaining permit numbers for 2016 because access is a limiting factor; even with the new hunting unit, this is expected to be compatible with the allocation, crane numbers, and hunter access. In the Ovando-Helmville unit hunters in 2015 found cranes had left the area before or on the first day of the season; it is believed this was due to some disturbance, which would not be helped by an earlier opener. The remainder of the Central Flyway is under federal frameworks for mid-continent sandhill cranes and remains unchanged for 2016. Other than normal calendar rotation, FWP proposes no changes to either the RMP or the mid-continent crane season for 2016. Proposed season dates are: For RMP sandhill cranes (special drawing permits): September 10 - October 2; for mid-continent sandhill cranes: October 1 - November 27. Public comment will run through 5:00 pm March 18, with final action at the April meeting.

Action: *Commissioner Tourtlotte moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Commission adopt for public comment the proposed 2016 early season migratory bird seasons as presented by FWP.*

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Action on Motion: *Motion Passed.*

24. 2016 Late Season Waterfowl Seasons/Closures – Proposed

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained for ducks, geese, swans, and coots, Montana is in both the Central and Pacific Flyways and follows FWS frameworks based on winter and breeding population status for geese, and May population and habitat surveys for ducks. FWS has started setting regulations earlier, and as such, FWP is moving its schedule earlier, with proposals in February and final action in April. The proposed seasons are for the maximum number of hunting days allowed by the FWS. In order to stay within the limit for the total number of days, and allow for late-season hunting, both flyways have short closures within the seasons, creating split seasons. There are two hunting zones within the Central Flyway for ducks and geese; the Commission approved a change for the Central Flyway duck zones, adding Yellowstone and Carbon Counties to the existing five counties (Big Horn, Treasure, Rosebud, Custer, and Prairie) to form a seven-county zone, Zone 2, which matches goose Zone 2. Public comment will run through 5 p.m. March 18, with final adoption at the April meeting. Proposed dates are as follows: Pacific Flyway - Ducks, coots, and geese: October 1 - January 8 and January 14 - 18 (except scaup season - closing December 25); Swans: October 8 - December 1; Central Flyway - Ducks and coots: Zone 1 - October 1 - January 5; Zone 2 - October 1 - 9 and October 22 - January 17; Geese - Zone 1 - October 1 - January 8 and January 14 - 18; Zone 2 - October 1-9 and October 22 - January 25; Tundra swans: October 1 - January 5; A bonus teal season October 1 - 9 in the Central Flyway would allow hunters to take two additional blue-winged teal; and Duck, coot, and goose daily bag and possession limits are proposed to be the same as in 2015-16.

Action: *Commissioner Tourtlotte moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the motion that the Commission approve for public comment the proposed 2016-17 late season migratory bird regulations as presented by FWP.*

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Action on Motion: *Motion Passed.*

25. 2016-2017 Hunting Season Dates – Final

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, stated the final proposal is unchanged from the tentative proposal (see minutes from the December 10, 2015 Commission meeting) with the exception of adding bighorn sheep archery season dates to the proposal: the first Saturday of September to September 14. Eighty-Nine comments were received; One-third spoke to shoulder seasons; there were a variety of other comments on longer or shorter deer and elk seasons, public access, seasons for buck deer management, a longer season on upland birds, and other topics.

Action: *Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the motion that the Commission adopt the final 2016 and 2017 Hunting Season Dates as presented by FWP.*

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Action on Motion: *Motion Passed.*

26. 2016-2017 Helena Urban Deer Plan Quota Ranges and Quota – Final

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, stated the final proposal is unchanged from the tentative proposal (see minutes from the December 10, 2015 Commission meeting); Eighteen comments were received; five against and seven supporting; two comments were on the subject of approving a quota range, and both were in favor; others made general comments about deer in Helena.

***See action below.**

27. 2016-2017 Game Damage/Management Season/Wildlife Health Authorizations Quotas – Final

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, stated the final proposal is unchanged from the tentative proposal (see minutes from the December 10, 2015 Commission meeting). Eighteen comments were received; few actually spoke to authorizing the quotas; most talked about shoulder seasons and the confusion among the public about the difference between shoulder seasons and game damage.

**See action below.*

**Action: Chairman Vermillion moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Commission adopt the final 2016 and 2017 antelope, moose, bighorn sheep, black bear, mountain lion, Helena Urban Deer Plan, game damage seasons and season quotas as presented by FWP.*

Action on Motion: Motion Passed.

**Action: Chairman Vermillion moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Commission adopt all other portions of the previous 2014-2015 antelope, moose, bighorn sheep, black bear, mountain lion, game damage seasons, season quotas and the Helena Urban Deer Plan regulations not affected by the Commission's actions today.*

Action on Motion: Motion Passed.

Action: Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Commission adopt March 15 as the deadline for all permit applications and subsequent allocations.

Action on Motion: Motion Passed.

20. Public Comment – For Issues Not On This Agenda

Chairman Vermillion stated this was the most arguist season setting proposal he has ever seen; a lot of difficult issues were covered; unhappy with the way some things turned out but understands why it needs to be done; hopes the legislature will realize the commitment the Department made to try and manage the objectives, and how hard the Commission and sportsmen worked to support the objectives, even if they were unhappy.

Action: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion Passed.

The meeting adjourned at 6:31 p.m.


Richard Stuker, Vice-Chairman


M. Jeff Hagener, Director